



Newsletter December 2012



Quiet Time in the K Classroom



A Visual Representation of
Angry vs. Calm Feelings

Mindfulness in Teaching and Learning

As I reflect on the events of the first half of the school year, I find that there are many things to be thankful for. Enrolling in a class on mindfulness is one of them. Due to the kindness and generosity of Taryn and Sandy, I was able to leave Fairville an hour early on Thursdays to attend a series of six classes, not only to learn mindfulness techniques but also to learn how those techniques can easily be implemented in an educational setting. The first thing I learned was that in order to bring mindfulness education to children, I needed to engage in the practices myself.

During my classes I learned how to take time in my daily life for relaxing sighs, deep breathing, body relaxation, simple yoga stretches, mindful eating and mindful walking. I learned how to stay present when listening and how to communicate with compassion. I left each class session feeling relaxed and refreshed, with a clearer understanding of how a few minutes of mindfulness each day is beneficial for all of us, including the young children at Fairville.

Mindfulness education for children is becoming more commonplace in school settings and many new resources are available to help teachers bring the practices into their classrooms. Research has shown that teaching children to be more aware of their bodies and helping them learn techniques for relaxation improves attention, focus and classroom behavior. The Kindergarten class at Fairville is already using some mindfulness practices during their daily quiet time; other classes employ some of the techniques as well. There are relaxation CD's, children's books, and websites that can help teachers and parents bring mindfulness into the lives of young children. A comprehensive list of resources is available at www.friendscouncil.org under the "resources" tab.

I hope everyone had a relaxing holiday break and that you are looking forward to all the joys that a new year will bring.

Peace to all,
Sharon

Growing and Learning

As I write this message to all of you, I'm enjoying my children's delight in celebrating New Year's! The beginning of each year seems to turn all of our attention either to reflecting on the past, imagining the future, or a little bit of both. In this way, I'm reminded of my child's efforts at school.

In late November, I had the opportunity, like all of you, to meet with my child's teacher to identify where he stood in terms of the goals discussed at the beginning of the year. I received some feedback, which was not wholly unexpected. Frankly, it was bittersweet. There were a few areas in which I was hoping he was further along. The teacher and I explored the situation, trying to get a handle on the factors involved – the when, how, who of the matter. After drilling down, we were then able to explore some *achievable yet challenging* next steps. As a parent and teacher, I relearned how important my role is in enabling and encouraging my child and yours to stretch and grow – get up on his “tip toes” a bit, while also making sure he is practicing and gaining confidence in things he already knows how to do.

While I was not exactly “smiling” as I ended our meeting in the Fall, since then I have learned to truly appreciate and enjoy working with my child and helping him take some control of his development. Sometimes this meant meeting him where he was and then working in small ways to help him reach for more. It also meant checking in with my child's teacher to ensure we are staying on track as a team. And as the New Year begins, I believe my child and I both feel a renewed sense of hope in growing and learning this coming year. This is my wish for you as well!

For more information and ideas on this topic and many more, please visit the National Association for the Education of Young Children at www.naeyc.org.

Rita Funchion

Thanks! Thanks! Thanks!

Thanks to all who participated in the Holiday Giving Tree program. We collected a multitude of gifts for the families, identified by La Comunidad Hispana, that needed our help in order to provide a happy holiday for their children. I know the families are grateful for your generous donations.

The teachers enjoyed a very delicious lunch thanks to the parent volunteers who stepped forward to provide food items and childcare so the staff could all participate in a festive meal.

We received many gifts for the classrooms from teacher wish lists. Thank you so much for supporting our teachers and our school program!

We also appreciate those who helped organize and those who attended one of the PJ story times with John Hendrix from Bayard Taylor Library and/or the Holiday Sing-along with Bill Currier. It's so nice to see our campus being utilized by our families!



Calendar

- January 3 Welcome Back to School!
- January 21 Martin Luther King, Jr. Day—School Closed
- January 22 Enrichment Session C Begins
- January 27 Family Open House for Prospective Families 2-4 pm
- January 28 Registration Forms for 2013-14 Due Today

In the Classrooms.....



Vicki and Liza's Ladybugs theme for December was sharing. The class read many books on the topic; a favorite was Should I Share My Ice Cream? by Mo Willems. The class painted using a variety of materials this month and also had fun playing in and drawing with shaving cream! They also cut out and decorated gingerbread cookies that may or may not have made it home to hang on the holiday tree!

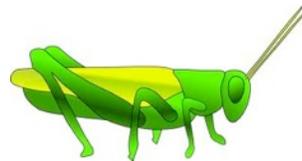
Meaghan and Rita's afternoon Ladybugs spent the month talking about emotions. Hugs, good books and kisses from Mom and Dad are things that make us happy. The class also talked what we can do if we are sad or frustrated: deep breaths, hugs, quiet time and going outside. The Ladybugs have also been making simple gifts (drawings and paintings) for classroom friends and experimenting with different kinds of painting (finger painting, scraping paint across paper, and bubble wrap painting).



The Bumblebees spent time in December learning about sharing and gift-giving. They read holiday books every day and made special gifts to give to their families. The class enjoyed a visit from Gabe's grandmother in which they learned all about Hanukkah. Sandy reports that the Bumblebees are becoming quite independent. They can choose their own play activities, work cooperatively with friends, and get themselves dressed for outdoor play. Bravo, Bumblebees!



The Fireflies have been exploring the letters in their names. They enjoyed a Name Hunt in which they found the letters of their names scattered around the room. After playing several letter identification games, the children put the letters on an alphabet chart and then counted and compared the total number of A's, S's, M's, etc. The Fireflies are continuing to care for the acorns they planted. Some of the children's acorns are growing and the class has a few mini-trees that are three inches high. Other acorns have not grown, which may give the Fireflies an opportunity to study things that rot!



The Grasshopper room was alive with bats this month! The students learned about many different bats and had a small bat cave in the corner of their room. It was fun hearing the children use the words "echolocation" and "nocturnal" and seeing all of their bats hanging in the room and in the hallway. Later in the month the classes created a beautiful winter mural complete with creative, child-crafted trees. The class also had a fir tree in the room that they used for still-life drawings and to decorate with edible delectables for the birds. As our December school days came to an end, they placed the tree outdoors so the birds, squirrels and other woodland creatures could enjoy a special treat.

In the Classrooms.....



The Butterflies busied themselves learning about the holiday traditions celebrated by the children in their classroom. The class read many holiday books and engaged in related activities. They made Christmas tree collages and used their observational skills to draw detailed, still-life poinsettia pictures. The class read Hanukkah books and made menorahs out of play-doh and straws. They also played dreidel to practice math skills. The children designed color patterns and then made fruit loop ornaments using the patterns they designed. The ornaments were hung on the Grasshopper's fir tree that is in the school yard. The children will see if the animals enjoyed their treat when they return to school in January.



The Kindergarten class was very excited as they counted down the days until Christmas on their classroom calendar. We kept them busy throughout the month writing and practicing their own version of Goldilocks and the Three Bears. The class performed the play twice, once for their parents and once for the rest of the school at Meeting for Sharing. The class also listened to many forest stories throughout the month, then each child dictated an individual forest story. The class had visits from several Mystery Readers (parents and teachers) who shared favorite books and related activities. Kindergarten students will be working on a non-fiction writing unit when they return from winter break. Each child has chosen a forest animal to study in detail and will be writing an "All About" book to share with their classmates and families. It is so much fun watching the skills of our young readers and writers develop and grow!

Annual Giving

We are fortunate at Fairville that so many of you willingly volunteer your time to help us in so many ways. We would not be able to run such a successful school without your generous gifts of time and talent. Thank you!

We are in the process of mailing Annual Giving cards to our current families and want to encourage you to make a contribution in support of our school and its mission. Tuition dollars do not cover all of the expenses we incur; we depend on Annual Giving and fundraising dollars to fill the gap. Every gift, large or small, is important. Our goal this year is for 100% of our families to participate in Annual Giving! Look for our card in your mailbox very soon!



This month we said goodbye to Sarah, Emily and Bonnie, our three sheep. They have returned to the barn for the winter. We're going to miss our fuzzy friends but we look forward to seeing them, or their relatives, in the spring as soon as the grass in the pasture begins to grow!

What about Oscar?

Oscar is an outdoor bunny and has developed a thick winter coat to protect him from the elements. He has a heated water bottle and plenty of straw to keep him warm on all but the coldest of winter days. Oscar comes home with me on the weekends where he enjoys lounging on my deck furniture, but will he will continue to be at school during the week. Please stop by and visit him—he enjoys having company!



Winter Weather

Now that winter is upon us, please take a moment to review our inclement weather policy.

During weather emergencies, Fairville follows the decision of the Kennett Consolidated School District for school closings and/or delayed openings or early dismissals. In the event of foul weather, before or during school, please call Kennett's Transportation Hotline (610-444-7456) for a recorded message about school closings, delays, or early dismissals. Or, call Fairville (610-388-1268) as our voicemail message will be updated with the necessary information.

We hope that you will have an opportunity to read [A Quaker Book of Wisdom](#), the book you received with your holiday card. Plans are in the works for a book discussion open to all members of our school community. We will give you more details when they are available. In the meantime, we hope you will enjoy reading and learning a bit more about the Quaker faith that informs our school philosophy and practices.

Family Open House on Sunday, January 27 2-4 pm

Please help us spread the word! Invite your friends and neighbors to bring their children to Fairville to explore our classrooms and campus. In addition to campus tours and information, activities will be set up in some of the classrooms to allow prospective families and their children to experience some of the ways that we engage children in play-based learning.

